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NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: THE GORBACHEV INITIATIVE

by John R. Walker



The Iceland summit between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan was the most dramatic confirmation of the Russian concern about where the nuclear arms race and the American strategic defence initiative are leading. The linking of the concessions proposed by Gorbachev at the Reykjavik meeting to his insistence on curbing the SDI program caused President Reagan to reject them. However Gorbachev's considerable concessions did suggest that the Soviet leader was serious when he proposed his wide-ranging nuclear disarmament scheme in January 1986.

This Icelandic meeting, proposed by Gorbachev, was billed as a preliminary session to clear the way and spell out the agenda for a major summit meeting in Washington as agreed at the initial Geneva summit in 1985. But Gorbachev went beyond this to make a series of proposals on a range of arms control issues. And these in turn elicited some new counterproposals by President Reagan, all of which foundered in the end over the Star Wars issue.

The two leaders did verbally agree on banning all intermediate range missiles in Europe, while allowing 100 INF missiles to be deployed by the Americans in the United States and 100 Soviet missiles of this type to be kept in Soviet Asia. They also agreed on certain steps towards verification and on freezing short-range missiles in Europe. They agreed to limit each side's strategic nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their nuclear launchers to 1,600. Finally they agreed to the US plan to start a phased accord on nuclear testing, beginning with verification of existing treaties and working towards a comprehensive test ban treaty. But there were differences over the interpretation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty of 1972. In Reagan's view the Gorbachev proposal to confine research on post 1972 developments to the laboratory for 10 years would have killed SDI.

However, all these proposals are said by both sides still to be on the negotiating table and it now will be up to the negotiators at Geneva to see whether any of them can be agreed upon and the Soviet-American summit process continued.

PREVIOUS CALLS FOR DISARMAMENT

In January of 1986 when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev presented his plan for general and complete nuclear disarmament there was a certain amount of skepticism in Western circles. The Soviet Union, it was said, has had a penchant for dramatic, wide-ranging disarmament plans that are designed to impress the public, but which, according to these critics, are neither practical nor realizable.

In the pre-atomic era, the Soviet Union was first off the mark with a proposal for "general and complete disarmament" made by Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov in 1927 to the League of Nations preparatory disarmament commission. It was followed the next year by a draft convention, but the Western powers shelved it.

When the United Nations was formed at the beginning of the nuclear age and dedicated to peace and security, the Americans with their Baruch Plan produced the first nuclear disarmament proposal. The Soviet Union quickly followed suit on 19 June 1946 when Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko presented the Soviet's contrary grand design for destroying all nuclear stocks, halting production and curbing future violations. However, the atmosphere of fear and mistrust, as each side rushed to develop their atomic weapons, precluded any agreement.

It was not until 10 May 1955 that the Soviets made what the West considered its first "serious" proposal

for comprehensive disarmament, a short-lived prelude to the “spirit of Geneva” at that summer’s summit conference.

The next major Soviet initiative toward dismantling all nuclear and conventional forces was made before the UN General Assembly on 18 September 1959 by Nikita Khrushchev, a three-stage, four-year plan, that appeared visionary but helped spark negotiations for several years. From then onwards and throughout the seventies, a fruitful period of arms control negotiations took place. As a result the two superpowers were jointly committed in the preambles to several treaties—the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Seabed Treaty of 1971, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, as well as the unratified Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974 and the SALT II Treaty of 1979—to seek general and complete disarmament in nuclear and conventional arms. And in the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 the idea of GCD was a central factor, still to be acted upon by both sides.

But it was not until after the INF and START arms control talks broke down in 1983 with a Soviet walkout, and the rise to power of the youngest Soviet leader in decades, Mikhail Gorbachev, that the Russians returned to the grand design in disarmament proposals, as a means of resuming negotiations with the United States.

In August 1985, the Soviets announced a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing until the end of that year, and in September tabled wide-ranging proposals at the Geneva arms control talks. In November came the first summit talks between President Ronald Reagan and any Soviet leader, sessions that at least appeared to break the ice in that relationship and suggested some new opportunities for future arms reduction negotiations. On January 1 the Soviet moratorium was extended.

THE GORBACHEV PROPOSALS

Secretary-General Gorbachev’s initiative, presented on 15 January 1986, stated that “the Soviet Union is proposing a step-by-step and consistent process of ridding the earth of nuclear weapons, to be implemented and completed within the next 15 years, before the end of this century.”

Saying that his country “as early as 1946 was the first to raise the question of prohibiting the production and use of atomic weapons and to make atomic energy serve peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind,” Gorbachev proposed a three-stage process to eliminate nuclear weapons completely.

In the first stage, over the next five to eight years, the USSR and the US would reduce by 50 per cent

those nuclear weapons “that can reach each other’s territory.” Each side would be allowed to retain “no more than 6,000 warheads” on the remaining strategic delivery vehicles. At the same time, the two superpowers would “mutually renounce the development, testing and deployment of space-strike weapons,” the United States would join the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing, and both would urge other states to adhere to such a test ban.

Also as part of stage one, the superpowers would eliminate their intermediate-range missiles in Europe, including Soviet SS-20s and American ground-launched cruise and Pershing II missiles. In addition, Britain and France would pledge “not to build up their respective nuclear arms” and the US would agree not to transfer its strategic or medium-range missiles to any other country.

In the second stage, starting no later than 1990 and lasting five to seven years, “other nuclear powers” would pledge to freeze all their nuclear arms and begin to eliminate any of their weapons installed in other territories, thus commencing the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

At the same time, the US and USSR would continue making reductions agreed on during the first stage and take further measures designed to get rid of their medium-range nuclear weapons and freeze their tactical nuclear systems.

Having completed their 50 per cent reductions of strategic launchers, the US and the USSR, along with all other nuclear powers, would eliminate their tactical nuclear weapons with a range of 1,000 kilometres or less. At the same stage, all the major industrial powers would mandatorily become members of the Soviet-American accord on the prohibition of space-strike weapons. All nuclear powers then would agree to stop nuclear weapons tests.

Finally, as an impediment to future weapons technology, there would be a ban, as Gorbachev put it, “on the development of non-nuclear weapons based on new physical principles,” weapons whose destructive capacity is “close to that of nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction.”

In the third stage, beginning no later than 1995, all remaining nuclear weapons would be eradicated and a universal accord drawn up proclaiming that no such weapons should ever again come into being. “By the end of 1999 there will be no nuclear weapons on earth.”

In case the Americans or anyone else should be concerned at past Soviet reluctance to verify arms reduction programmes adequately, Gorbachev stated that destruction of weapons would be carried out on an agreed schedule for each stage, and verification would be carried out both by national technical means and through on-site inspection. “The

USSR," he said, "is ready to reach agreement on any other additional verification measures."

Summing up, the Soviet leader stated that "we propose that we should enter the third millenium without nuclear weapons, on the basis of mutually acceptable and strictly verifiable agreements."

Gorbachev made a strong pitch for his method of eliminating nuclear forces as opposed to President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative which would, in Reagan's words, make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" by perhaps 2010. "Instead of wasting the next 10-15 years by developing new, extremely dangerous weapons in space, allegedly designed to make nuclear arms useless," the Soviet leader argued, "would it not be more sensible to start eliminating those arms and finally bring them down to zero?"

Emphasizing that his proposals were addressed, as he said, "to the whole world," Gorbachev tossed off a number of other suggestions, helpful to the arms reduction process, that could be initiated more immediately and which could involve many countries other than the US and the Soviet Union.

Referring to his extension of the Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests and his hopes for American cooperation in that field, he urged resumption of the trilateral negotiations, which included Britain, with the aim of drafting a comprehensive test ban treaty. He further expressed the hope that negotiations for a multi-lateral test ban could begin within the forum of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. He reiterated: "We declare unequivocally that verification is no problem so far as we are concerned." To complete the compass on banning nuclear explosions, he assured the non-aligned countries that the Soviet Union was ready to consult on amending the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty to cover underground, as well as underwater, atmospheric and outer space tests.

Although he inveighed against the weaponization of space, he did not propose any separate treaties on space or on anti-satellite weapons. He merely deplored the Star Wars programme and opted verbally for "large-scale projects of peaceful exploration of space by all of mankind."

He did argue that it was feasible, "even in this century" to completely eliminate chemical weapons. He urged that the talks at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament be intensified in order to conclude a convention banning chemical weapons and then destroying the stockpiles.

"We are prepared," he said, "for a timely declaration of the location of enterprises producing chemical weapons and for the cessation of their production." The Soviets were prepared to develop "procedures for destroying the relevant industrial

base" and then to eliminate the stocks, all under strict control, "including international on-site inspections."

Gorbachev also had suggestions for the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks in Vienna, as well as the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe. Pointing out that at last a framework for agreement was emerging in Vienna, he stressed adequate validation of any commitment to freeze troops at certain levels. To observe this, aside from national technical means, he proposed that "permanent verification posts could be established to monitor any military contingents entering the reduction zone."

As for the Stockholm talks, he said it was essential "to reduce the number of troops participating in major military manoeuvres notifiable under the Helsinki Final Act." But the bottleneck of these negotiations, he said, was the issue of notifications of major exercises. If agreement could not be reached on air, ground and naval issues now, perhaps a partial solution could be made involving ground and air forces and leaving the naval ones to the next stage of this conference.

Making a direct appeal to the Europeans for his peace initiative, Gorbachev argued that Europe had "a special mission. That mission is erecting a new edifice of detente." He applauded the role of the Europeans, as well as Canadians and Americans, in producing the "new thinking" involved in the Helsinki Final Act.

He also claimed that his disarmament initiative was aimed at providing "security in Asia," but it should not be dependent on resolving the "so-called regional conflicts" in Asia and elsewhere. He did suggest that the funds saved by this sweeping programme of disarmament would make available more funds for development in Third World countries, a timely reminder of the International Conference on Disarmament and Development which had been scheduled for Paris in the summer of 1986, but which has been indefinitely postponed.

Stressing at length the "pivotal" nature of peace and disarmament in Soviet foreign policy, Gorbachev stated that "the Soviet proposals place the USSR and the US in an equal position. These proposals do not attempt to outwit or outsmart the other side. We are proposing to take the road of sensible and responsible decision."

COMMENTARY

What are the aims of this unexpected and usually detailed proposal for world disarmament from the Soviet leader who has said that the present

is "a crucial turning point" in the life of his country and of the contemporary world? If Gorbachev's words are taken at face value, he seems seriously interested in ending the nuclear arms race. He recognizes, as he said, that the "gift of the energy of the atom" is also "an instrument for the self-annihilation of mankind." The emphasis in his statement on the need to end nuclear testing, the new stress on adequate verification and inspection, and the very obvious concern about the Strategic Defence Initiative (because its corollary would be a Soviet build-up in offensive nuclear forces), all suggest a serious concern about a new cycle in the arms competition between the superpowers.

It is worth noting in this connection that the Soviets have changed their approach to arms control in recent years. With the SALT I and the ABM treaties in the early seventies, there was a minimum of technical detail, reflecting Soviet reluctance to reveal much about their armed forces or to allow constraints on their technology. But, with SALT II in 1979 and with their recent proposals in 1985, there has been a greater willingness to include more technical elements, suggesting greater interest in realistic restraint.

It should always be remembered, however, as Robin Ranger has pointed out, that "the Soviets consistently stressed the political rather than the technical elements of strategic stability" in their approach to arms control and disarmament in the past.

Thus Gorbachev talks about improving the international situation and the need "to overcome the negative, confrontational tendencies that have grown in recent years." He is attempting to refurbish detente by urging the European countries to revive that sense of accommodation. The heavy-handed support of the European peace movement during NATO's deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles may have backfired, but the Soviets may still hope that the weight of European diplomacy will sway President Reagan from his Star Wars policy. Furthermore, the Soviet proposals have the apparent merit of being a less costly and more reasonable route to nuclear disarmament than the SDI path.

Gorbachev's proposals would also appear to have a domestic political purpose. They were headlined at the 27th Party Congress and touted in the Soviet press as "an epoch-making document in the struggle for peace." The disarmament programme could obviously be aimed at forestalling the necessity of an expensive arms build-up to counter American strategic defence. That would be a costly option that could wreck Gorbachev's plans for modernizing the Soviet economy on which the new regime has placed so much emphasis.

As always in recent exchanges between the superpowers, there is the apparent need to win the propaganda battle. Having lost the rhetorical stakes over which side was to blame for the breakdown of the START talks, the new Soviet regime seems determined to be seen as the side most willing to negotiate. Building on whatever "spirit of Geneva" was resurrected at the summit talks, Gorbachev proposed the expansive disarmament plan so unexpectedly that the Americans were caught without a measured response. It was timed, for global effect, at the start of the United Nations' "International Year of Peace" and just as the Geneva arms talks resumed. Despite the skepticism in some Western official and media circles—the NATO Secretary-General Lord Carrington referred to the proposals as 'nebulous'—the Gorbachev initiative has won public commendation from serious arms control experts in the West.

Unlike the Khrushchev proposal, Gorbachev confines his plan largely to the elimination of nuclear weapons. These are seen as the main threat to mankind, the Soviet security and to the expansion of communism. For the reduction of conventional weapons, Gorbachev seems willing to depend on arms control negotiations, knowing that total disarmament is still a utopian expectation.

His time scale is far more realistic than Khrushchev's four years and his plan is more flexible. None of the stages is tied to a final treaty, and the individual items, like test bans or Euromissile agreements, are open to separate negotiation. Gorbachev, throughout his proposals, pledges his country's willingness to allow open inspection and realistic verification procedures in all agreements. This is a welcome change that should be worth exploring.

Ironically some of the Soviet leader's ideas look very much like old American positions. As former American arms control negotiator Paul Warnke and others have pointed out, the deep cuts of 50 per cent in intercontinental strategic missiles and a 'zero option' in Euromissiles reflect in part proposals of the Reagan administration, while the support for a comprehensive test ban and the opposition to strategic defence reflect American positions of the seventies.

On the surface, there appear to be some areas where Gorbachev gives the impression of going the extra mile. One example is his extension of the Soviet unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing for another three months (and extended again after the Chernobyl disaster) while the Americans are continuing their own tests. The American objection is that such tests are necessary to develop the Strategic Defence Initiative and to assist in the modernization of their nuclear weapons until such systems actually become obsolete or are banned in a bilateral treaty.

Another Gorbachev concession could be his willingness to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe without linking it to a commitment to drop the Strategic Defence Initiative; only strategic weapons reductions are linked to the banning of Star Wars. Yet in the Iceland talks, Gorbachev linked his INF removals, as well as his willingness to accept partial limits on nuclear testing with a curb on SDI development.

His proposal to reduce strategic launchers by 50 per cent, with a limit of 6,000 warheads, includes another concession: American nuclear forces in Europe are no longer included in this category. (The Americans have always objected to labelling their medium-range aircraft based on land and on aircraft carriers as 'strategic'.) In Reykjavik, President Reagan went along with this limit on strategic warheads.

With his January 15 initiative Gorbachev also modified the Soviet Union's previous INF proposals at Geneva. The USSR had argued that Soviet intermediate-range forces in Europe should be reduced only as far as the level of French and British nuclear forces combined. Gorbachev has said that the USSR is now willing to see all Soviet and American medium-range forces completely removed. While this is happening, he is also willing to allow British and French nuclear weapons to remain in place, so long as neither country builds up its nuclear forces. He has dropped the old insistence that British and French nuclear missiles be counted as part of the total Euromissile arsenal in the negotiations.

One American objection to this part of the plan is that it does not cover the mobile SS-20s based in Asia. Those located on the Kamchatka peninsula can hit Alaska or Hawaii as well as US bases in Japan and South Korea. Furthermore these SS-20s could be transferred back to Europe in a crisis although, since Moscow says the infrastructures for these mobile missiles in Europe would have been destroyed with the missiles under their proposal, it would take some time to re-establish these weapons in Europe. At the Iceland summit, Gorbachev agreed to deal with the Asian objection by limiting Soviet deployment of SS-20s in Soviet Asia to 100 warheads, while the Americans could also keep 100 intermediate-range missile warheads, but only on the US mainland.

Another objection is that France and Britain now are engaged in modernizing their respective missile forces, equipping them with multiple warheads that are independently targetable, thus increasing their nuclear weapons stockpiles in the 1990s by a factor of four or five. Neither Britain nor France is likely to want to halt this process until the superpowers have actually cut back their strategic forces. Furthermore

Gorbachev calls upon the United States not to transfer any of its strategic or medium-range missiles to any other countries. The Americans object that this would prevent the transfer of the new Trident missiles to Britain or the shift of any Pershing and cruise missiles to other foreign locations. At Reykjavik, British and French missiles were left out of the agreements reached.

Beyond all these considerations is the general problem of defining what is allowable Star Wars "research." It may be just semantics, but the Russians have used both the terms "development" and "creation" when referring to the question of both sides renouncing the development, testing and deployment of what they call "space strike" weapons. In Article V of the original ABM the Russian term "create" is used in their text. Article V states that "each party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, space-based, or mobile land-based." There is no clear definition of 'research' or even of 'components' in the treaty.

Within the United States this is a controversial issue. Gerard C. Smith, who was the chief US negotiator of the ABM treaty, insists that "it was not our intention that any type of technology for space-based ABM systems could be developed or tested under the treaty." Reagan administration officials, such as Kenneth Adelman, head of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, disagree and argue that a search of all the negotiating papers shows that research, development and testing of Star Wars equipment is allowable under their interpretation of that treaty. At Reykjavik Gorbachev argued that any testing of space elements of anti-ballistic defence in space should be confined to the laboratory, implying that the ABM treaty ought to be amended more precisely.

If the basic aim of the Gorbachev initiative were to halt the SDI process in any way possible, this could be the major stumbling block to any real agreement on this disarmament proposal. This is especially true if the Soviets and the Americans cannot agree on what sorts of research would be permissible under the ABM treaty, or if they cannot agree to amend that treaty to allow certain kinds of research.

Finally, the whole Gorbachev plan faces the Western alliance itself with the question of whether it could carry on without nuclear weapons. The proposal for a new 'zero option' in Europe as put forward by Gorbachev has already raised some familiar West European fears. One is that the US would be decoupled from Western Europe, afraid to come to its defence with strategic nuclear weapons for fear of Soviet retaliation against the continental United States. A second concern is that Western European countries (excepting Britain and France in the first

stage) would have to rely on conventional weapons to deter Soviet and East European forces, which they currently perceive to be numerically superior. Finally there is the fear that, even if SS-20s are removed from Europe, the USSR could still re-assign some of its ICBM strategic missiles to targets in Western Europe.

Officials on both sides of the Atlantic have asked whether European countries are prepared to sacrifice more of their high standard of living to develop the kind of conventional forces which are considered necessary to deter a Warsaw Pact incursion, without the need to rely on nuclear missiles.

But the Gorbachev plan raises an even more fundamental question: can the nuclear genie ever be put back in the bottle? Since nuclear knowledge can never be eliminated, can adequate verification procedures ever be devised so that no country would be able to hide its bomb when all the others had demolished theirs?

As C.G. Jacobsen, a senior researcher of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, said about the Gorbachev initiative:

"The nuclear genie is out. To destroy all stocks could be naive, and suicidal. We need to break the arms spiral, and halt the move to forward deployments, minimal warning, and computer dependence. We need to cut redundant arsenals, arsenals that exceed deterrence requirements, and spawn fear, and jitteriness. We must cut. We cannot disarm, or at least not without a radical change in mindsets, East and West. In today's world, Gorbachev's dream, like the Siren songs of Greek mythology, promise danger, not relief."

What is new is that both sides have actually begun to contemplate a 50 per cent reduction in their strategic weapons, an idea unthinkable five or six years ago. This suggests that there are redundant arsenals that can be disposed of without wrecking the military postures of either side.

At the same time there may be military as well as political concerns at the direction technology and strategy are leading us. Questions about the 'Follow On Forces Attack' plan in Europe and debates over the US 'Air/Land Battle' doctrine and their effect on an opponent's strategy are current. The way in which Pershing missiles have cut the reaction time to six to ten minutes with its effect on decision-making are serious concerns. The dependency of modern weapons technology and space reconnaissance and communication of computerization raises urgent questions about the time and facts available for deliberate political decisions and adequate command and control of crisis situations.

But there are the military mindsets, as well as the political ones, to contend with in viewing such a sweeping proposal as Gorbachev's. The offensive

strategy that is built into Soviet military thinking and the first-use problem that is always at the back of American military strategy because its conventional forces in Europe depend on it, may be roadblocks to seeking the kind of disarmament proposed here. There is little public evidence in NATO military circles of a serious debate on the possibilities of minimum deterrence as either politically or militarily practicable as yet. Certainly Soviet military circles have been more interested in nuclear and conventional buildup in recent years than in debating nuclear deterrence at a minimal level.

An example of how the NATO military adheres to the status quo, unless the Americans favour change, is the experience of Canada's Admiral Robert Falls. When he was chairman of NATO's military committee, he found himself roundly censored in 1983 for publicly suggesting that NATO could rid itself of a lot of unuseable nuclear weapons and could even unilaterally reduce its nuclear weaponry by 50 per cent, without harming its defences.

There is also the political problem of Western Europe's continuing fear of being de-linked from the American strategic forces. This was the basis of the Pershing and cruise missile deployment decision of 1979, a move that of itself created problems in the cohesion of the alliance. Linkage has again raised its head, as the Americans consider weapons reductions in Europe at the new Geneva START talks.

Certainly NATO, and especially its principal European members, have never seriously considered a nuclear-free defence of Europe as being either militarily credible or an example of effective deterrence against heavily conventionally-armed Warsaw Pact forces. Politically it has had no support in Washington and no studies of it have been made by NATO.

There is, of course, the argument that some nuclear weapons are always going to be necessary to keep the peace, and that raises the question of how many would be necessary for serious deterrence. If minimal deterrence between the superpowers was possible, nuclear proliferation would still be a major problem.

Whether the superpowers and the rest could ever agree on no nuclear weapons or on some minimum level makes it ever more urgent to develop assured verification procedures against cheating and an enforcement institution against those who break the nuclear rules. Gorbachev's acceptance of international on-site inspection, both in his January proposal and in the Stockholm confidence-building agreement, are hopeful signs. The idea that the UN Security Council, which includes the five major nuclear powers, could be the international control agency would be worth exploring, but would the five abandon their veto on nuclear weapons issues?

CONCLUSIONS

The Gorbachev initiative of January 15, despite its obvious propaganda value, its semi-political aims, and its utopian goal, faces us with the moral problem of whether we should try to negotiate, not just arms control, but some measure of disarmament, especially in the overburdened area of nuclear weaponry.

It is no panacea, but the plan does suggest new opportunities, if the West has the political will and patience to attempt to develop them, and if the Soviet Union, when it gets down to further negotiations, provides concrete proposals that match the Gorbachev vision.

The Soviet leader's ambitious disarmament programme is the most detailed of the Russian schemes to provide specific steps towards the reduction of nuclear arms. Gorbachev told the Soviet 27th Party Congress, in a lengthy and thoughtful discussion, that the Soviet Union intends "to work perseveringly" for the realization of this initiative, "regarding it as the central direction of our foreign policy for the coming years."

Aside from those in the Western alliance who are skeptical about the Gorbachev plan, there are skeptics in the Soviet hierarchy and in its military forces. Gorbachev, on whom so many Russians are pinning their hopes for economic change in the Soviet Union, must persuade these other elements in his society that constructive proposals for arms reductions can be productive and not weaken his country's security.

To do that, the Soviet leader requires a positive response from the other side, reflecting a Western willingness to test the sincerity of this new approach. Otherwise his call for "new thinking about the nuclear era" will be dismissed by the familiar Soviet hardliners as being based on "dangerous illusions" about the United States. They will point to the failure of this bold initiative as proof of the lack of desire on the part of the United States for any kind of control over its nuclear forces.

Seweryn Bialer argues that the genuine Soviet interest in a comprehensive strategic weapons agreement is "only secondarily dictated by domestic economic considerations. Far more significant are Soviet security concerns. These include the widening American lead in sophisticated technology, the accelerating American nuclear arms programme, and the tension and danger inherent in a new arms race." Especially there is the fear of the unknown, of what lies ahead with the grandiose Strategic Defence Initiative. "If such awesome security considerations are more important than economic considerations in the minds of new leaders," he concludes, "together they afford the United States the firmest

foundation for potentially successful negotiations with the Soviet Union on strategic arms control."

If so, and the Icelandic summit would seem to confirm this, now would still appear to be a unique opportunity for the United States and the West to work at serious arms control negotiations, to debate thoroughly the necessity for SDI development, and to make, perhaps, some real steps towards disarmament.

NOTES

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